

Message Text

PAGE 01 SAIGON 07500 301410 Z

53

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

OMB-01 RSR-01 /083 W

----- 066800

R 301225 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0964

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 7500

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJECT: ARCHBISHOP BINH VIEWS THE POLITICAL SCENE

1. IN A CONVERSATION APRIL 30 WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER SAGION ARCHBISHOP JGUYEN VAN BINH OFFERED THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS CURRENTLY ACTIVE IN SOUTH VIETNAM. THE FREEDOM PARTY'S RELATION TO THE CHURCH

2. ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE FREEDOM PARTY AS A " CATHOLIC PARTY", THE ARCHBISHOP PREDICTABLY SAID THAT THE CHURCH GAVE IT NO BACKING EITHER " OFFICIALLY OR UNOFFICIALLY." REFERRING TO THE PASTORAL LETTER THAT THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS ISSUED EARLIER IN THE YEAR (SEE SAGION 3600) HE AFFIRMED TH CHURCH'S INSIST- ENCE ON STAYING OUT OF POLITICS AND STRESSED THAT CATHOLIC LAYMEN WERE FREE TO JOIN ANY POLITICAL PARTY THAT DID NOT OPPOSE THE CH-
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 07500 301410 Z

URCH'S PRINCIPLES. AN INSTRUCTION TO STAY OUT OF POLITICS HAD GONE DOWN TO THE PARISH PRIESTS. HOWEVER BINH ADMITTED THAT NOT ALL OF THEM WERE OBEYING, SINCE SEVERAL WERE STRONG " INDIVIDUALS ." HE DID NOT SEEM UPSET BY THIS.

3. THE ARCHBISHOP BELIEVED IT WOULD BE UNWISE FOR AN EXCLUSIVELY CATHOLIC PARTY TO BE FORMED SINCE THE CATHOLICS ARE A MINORITY IN THE COUNTRY. HE NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT THERE WERE CATHOLICS IN THE DEMOCRACY PARTY AND THE NEW SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE AS WELL AS IN THE FREEDOM PARTY.

THE DEMOCRACY PARTY AND ITS COMPETITORS

4. THE ARCHBISHOP OBSERVED THAT THE DEMOCRACY PARTY SEEMED TO BE ORGANIZED " EVERYWHERE". HE CHARACTERIZED IT AS THE PARTY OF THE AUTHORITIES. THE FREEDOM PARTY ON THE OTHER HAND LACKED LEADERSHIP AND MONEY. UPPER HOUSE CHAIRMAN NGUYEN VAN HUYEN WAS A GOOD UH CHAIRMAN BINH COMMENTED BUT WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE A STRONG LEADER OF A POLITICAL PARTY EVEN THOUGH HE WAS BEING " BEGGED" TO ASSUME THE PARTY' S LEADERSHIP. AS FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE IT SEEMED VIRTUALLY INACTIVE. SHRUGGING THE ARCHBISHOP REMARKED THAT HE WAS NOT EVEN WELL INFORMED ABOUT WHICH PARTIES WERE IN THE SDA. ASKED FINALLY ABOUT THE GROUP AROUND BIG MINH THE ARCHBISHOP SAID HE DID NOT THINK BIG MINH WAS MUCH OF A POLITICIAN.

5. THE ARCHBISHOP IN COMMENTING ON THE DP SAID THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO SEE A PARTY EMERGE " FROM THE PEOPLE" TO PLAY AN INDEPENDENT OR EVEN AN OPPOSITION ROLE ALONGSIDE THE PARTY OF THE AUTHORITIES. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT SEE THIS HAPPENING YET.
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